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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this curriculum research project was to devise an instrument that would reveal general information about the philosophy, objectives, and curriculum of a school without requiring in-depth analysis of any particular subject-matter area. The instrument presented here was developed through a group-process consensus approach by committee members who examined curriculum development theories, reviewed curriculum evaluation research, studied the task-analysis approach, delineated terms, differentiated goals from objectives, and reviewed learning theories. The instrument was pilot tested in selected schools by each of the 25 members of the curriculum evaluation project committee. This pilot testing revealed that the philosophy of most sampled schools was not tied closely to the day-to-day educational process and that, in most schools, assessment was not an important step in the curriculum development process. The five-page instrument examines how curriculum objectives fill student needs in a number of areas and how curriculum is developed and evaluated. It can be administered in any elementary, middle, or secondary school. (Author/JM)

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DESIGNING, IMPLEMENTING, AND ASSESSING A CURRICULUM EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

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by

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Rationale

This paper describes a project from which a curriculum evaluation instrument was designed. The procedures and activities that were incorporated in developing, designing, implementing, and assessing the curriculum evaluation instrument are also reported.

The primary purpose of the curriculum research project was to devise an instrument that would be flexible enough to be administered in any elementary, middle, or secondary school and that would reveal general information about the philosophy, objectives, and curriculum of the school without in-depth analysis of any particular subject-matter area. Presented as Figure I is the curriculum evaluation instrument that was developed and tested.

This paper suggests techniques for implementing the instrument and for identifying areas of a school's educational program that may, or may not, currently satisfy the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor developmental needs of the students in a particular school or school system. The

EA 010 825

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authors offer an analysis of the instrument and present information that may prove beneficial to administrators, curriculum specialists, and classroom teachers who are interested in developing evaluation instruments for assessing curricula in the modern school setting.

The authors propose that curriculum evaluation studies represent worthwhile and challenging considerations for the administrator, for the curriculum specialist, and for the classroom teacher even in instances where inconclusive findings result, a view supported by Longstreth, Stanley, and Rice (1974) and by Evans (1974). Literature research indicates a need to evaluate and to channel results of curriculum evaluation as feedback into the planning and implementation phases of ongoing curriculum development. Turney (1966) stressed the necessity for administrators, specialists, and teachers to determine specific weaknesses of their educational systems if remedies were to be implemented. Turney believes that there is a tendency to incorporate new procedures and approaches simply because they are new and that such decisions are not always based on an awareness of the results regarding the methods that may be employed.

Frymier (1966) stated that the national assessment movement along with the requirement for evaluation included as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act have added impetus to the concept of and the need for curriculum evaluation.

Developing the Instrument

Development activities included using the democratic group-process approach, examining curriculum development theories, reviewing curriculum evaluation research, studying the task-analysis approach applied to curriculum development activities, delineating the terms curriculum and instruction, distinguishing goals from objectives, and reviewing generally recognized learning theories.

The group-process approach provided a variety of interaction and feedback among the members of the project committee charged with developing the instrument. The challenges, however, of a group procedure for designing a curriculum evaluation instrument included (1) arriving at a consensus for format; (2) deciding on questions to include because of the range of training, experience, philosophies, and perceptions among the various project participants; and (3) functioning within specified time restraints.

An investigation to determine the status of curriculum evaluation instruments currently used revealed a lack of implementable instruments available for assessing a school's curriculum. Examination of numerous Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' self-studies revealed an absence of pertinent information relative to the ongoing instructional program for a particular school. Furthermore, the data in the reviewed studies were most often reported in descriptive format. Although the Southern Association format (1960) was the instrument used most frequently to evaluate curricula, it was found to be unsuitable for gathering the kinds of information needed for designing a feasible curriculum evaluation instrument. The Southern Association evaluation criteria does not incorporate objective analysis, does not examine curricula in terms of students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development, nor does it include questions stated in behavioral, measurable terms.

Because no generally usable, objective, and broad-based curriculum evaluation instrument was found to be readily available to the researchers, the investigators devised an instrument that could be administered in private, parochial, or public schools and that would reveal general information about the philosophy, objectives, and curriculum of the school.

The following procedures were used in developing the instrument:

1. Two broad areas were examined: (a) the philosophy and objectives of the schools and (b) the curricula of the schools selected for sampling.

2. It was determined that major questions to be considered in developing the instrument should include: (a) What kinds of information do we now have available about the curricula and about the learning accomplishments of students in the school system? (b) What information do we need about the curricula of the schools in the system? (c) Will the answers to these questions asked in the instrument generate new knowledge and information that can be utilized by administrators and that will aid the classroom teacher whose responsibility is to implement the curriculum through daily instruction?

Implementing and Assessing the Instrument

As a pilot experiment to determine needed theoretical and pragmatic revisions and to provide feedback for the interacting of the project members, the instrument was administered in a selected school by each of the 25 members of the curriculum evaluation project committee. Findings of the pilot testing of the instrument revealed the following:

1. While sampled schools recognized an overall philosophy, this philosophy was not always outwardly evidenced in the day-to-day educational processes. The philosophy of the school was considered to operate somewhat "apart" from daily learning activities in many schools.

2. Those sampled acknowledged the necessity for instructional objectives for each course in a curriculum but were not as enthusiastic about the importance of or necessity for overall curriculum objectives. There was a tendency to operate from goals rather than from specific curriculum objectives. Goals are the more general and remote ends of schooling; whereas, objectives are precise statements that are derived from goals.

3. Many of the respondents were unfamiliar with the terms cognitive, affective, and psychomotor as used in the instrument.

4. Community involvement in the form of indirect feedback was viewed as helpful in formulating curriculum, but developing overall objectives was considered an administrative function.

5. Those sampled believed that assessment was not an important step in the curriculum development process although the authors maintain that curriculum evaluation is of equal importance to the other two stages of curriculum development—planning and implementing.

The evaluation instrument should indicate opportunities for learning which are available to a specific school population and the basis for decisions regarding these opportunities and should serve functionally to strengthen the curriculum.

The designers recognized that there are many aspects of curriculum evaluation that were not treated by this instrument including instruction, personnel, and library facilities. The instrument was not intended to be all-encompassing; it was purposely limited to assessing philosophy, objectives, and curriculum.

Conclusions and Implications

Administrators, teachers, counselors, and other individuals responsible for making curriculum decisions are encouraged to use curriculum evaluation instruments as they seriously and objectively examine the philosophy, objectives, and curriculum in their schools. School personnel sometimes do not attempt to determine the impact of curriculum changes nor do they always have a guage by which they can measure possible effects of curriculum change. As Payne has proposed (1973), curriculum may take a variety of forms which should be as representative as possible of the needs and desires of an individual school's program. The curriculum evaluation instrument that was developed will not indicate if a school is good or bad--nor was it intended to do so. It is an instrument for improvement and can be of value in any school. The attitudes of the school personnel who utilize and implement the instrument will determine the worth of the evaluation and of the curriculum evaluation instrument.

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Figure I

CURRICULUM EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

For the purposes of this evaluation instrument, the following definitions were recognized:

A. Curriculum: an organizational pattern for structuring learning. This is the preplanned dimension of the instructional program. Curriculum is defined to differentiate from instruction which is defined as the process of putting opportunities for learning before the student. Instruction is the implementation of the curriculum.

B. Objective: a statement which specifies
   1. Who is expected to perform the task.
   2. What performance is desired.
   3. Where the task should be performed.
   4. How the task is to be performed.
   5. Expectancy level which is expected in accomplishing the task.

   Objectives are derived from Goals which are the more general and remote ends of schooling.

Instructions: Circle your evaluation of each item according to the following scale: 5 = Excellent; 4 = Good; 3 = Average; 2 = Poor; and 1 = Doesn't exist.

Part I

1. Identify the extent to which the following statements are evident in the school's curriculum objectives:
   a. Concisely stated in written form 5 4 3 2 1
   b. Derived from the statement of philosophy 5 4 3 2 1
   c. Stated in measurable terms 5 4 3 2 1
   d. Formulated with input from:
      (1) faculty 5 4 3 2 1
      (2) students 5 4 3 2 1
      (3) parents 5 4 3 2 1
      (4) other members of the community 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

2. To what extent are objectives so stated that faculty members can understand the purpose of the curriculum? 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments.

This evaluation instrument was developed by the members of a graduate curriculum class at the University of New Orleans under the leadership of Dean Milton Ferguson of the College of Education.

3. To what extent do the curriculum objectives express concern for the total development of the individual including:
   a. Communication skills reflected in:
      (1) reading 5 4 3 2 1
      (2) writing 5 4 3 2 1
      (3) speaking 5 4 3 2 1
      (4) listening 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

   b. Practice of principles of American citizenship. 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

   c. The development and practice of work skills. 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

   d. Acquiring knowledge and practice of basic physical and mental health. 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

   e. Growth in the area of character development and family and other social relationships. 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

   f. Knowledge about and participation in leisure activities. 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

4. To what extent do the curriculum objectives take into consideration the specific needs of students as related to the following areas:
   a. Cognitive needs 5 4 3 2 1
   b. Affective needs 5 4 3 2 1
   c. Psychomotor needs 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

5. To what extent do the curriculum objectives encourage students' involvement in their learning activities? 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

   Summary Comments and Recommendations for Part I.

Part II

1. To what extent does the curriculum incorporate activities from the
   a. Cognitive domain 5 4 3 2 1
   b. Affective domain 5 4 3 2 1
   c. Psychomotor domain 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

2. To what extent is the curriculum consistent with stated objectives? 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

3. To what extent does the curriculum provide for diversity in course offerings to meet student needs and interests? 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

4. To what extent does the curriculum provide flexibility to allow the student to adjust his program during the school year? 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

5. To what extent does the curriculum provide a sequential development of learning experiences and content? 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

6. To what extent does the curriculum provide the student with time to pursue his own interests through
   a. Recreational areas 5 4 3 2 1
   b. Instructional areas 5 4 3 2 1
   c. Resource centers:
      (1) School library 5 4 3 2 1
      (2) Media center 5 4 3 2 1
      (3) Others_____ 5 4 3 2 1
   d. Off-campus educational opportunities 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

7. To what extent are the following considered in curriculum development:
   - a. Faculty input 5 4 3 2 1
   - b. Student input 5 4 3 2 1
   - c. Assessment of community needs 5 4 3 2 1
   - d. Current curriculum research studies from throughout the nation 5 4 3 2 1
   - e. Parent input 5 4 3 2 1
   - f. Current learning theory 5 4 3 2 1
   - g. Student profiles as measured by
     - (1) demographic data 5 4 3 2 1
     - (2) academic data 5 4 3 2 1
   - h. Different organizational patterns as exemplified by
     - (1) core 5 4 3 2 1
     - (2) broad fields 5 4 3 2 1
     - (3) modular or flexible 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

8. To what extent does the curriculum afford opportunities for the development of students' capacities in the fundamental skills of
   - a. Reading 5 4 3 2 1
   - b. Writing 5 4 3 2 1
   - c. Listening 5 4 3 2 1
   - d. Observing 5 4 3 2 1
   - e. Speaking 5 4 3 2 1
   - f. Computing 5 4 3 2 1
   - g. Problem-solving techniques 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

9. To what extent does the curriculum allow opportunities for students to develop an understanding for and to promote tolerance and respect for their culture and the culture of others? 5 4 3 2 1

   Comments:

10. To what extent does the curriculum provide for
    - a. A continuous plan of evaluation by
      - (1) the professional staff 5 4 3 2 1
      - (2) students 5 4 3 2 1
      - (3) parents concerned with the school 5 4 3 2 1
    - b. Procedures for the implementation of suggested curriculum changes. 5 4 3 2 1

    Comments:

11. To what extent does the curriculum extend study for students beyond the school; for example, field trips, visits to industries, participation in community government? 5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

12. To what extent is use made of community resource people to involve the community in the curriculum of the school? 5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

Summary Comments and Recommendations for Part II.